

**COMMUNITY DIALOG  
ON  
TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE**

**Meeting Summary of March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2003**

Supervisor Sharon Bulova welcomed attendees of the fourth meeting of the Community Dialog on Transportation and Land Use (Community Dialog). She asked the group to be thinking about the program for April 2<sup>nd</sup>, which provides an opportunity to bring back previous speakers, or add something to the series that was not included in the current syllabus.

Sharon invited members of the group who were not “series’d out” to participate in a first time-ever Community Budget Workshop Series at the Government Center. The two part series (Saturday, March 15<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, from 9 AM to 12 PM) will give County residents an opportunity to receive an in depth briefing on both the General County and School budgets. During the second morning of the series, participants will break into Discussion Groups, similar to our Community Dialog, facilitated by County budget analysts. Participants will be asked what they would change or do differently than the County Executive’s Recommended FY2004 Budget. The Workshops provide an opportunity for enhanced community participation in the budget process during this challenging year.

Sharon announced that, in response to suggestions from Discussion Leaders, the number of this evening’s panelists was reduced in order to provide more time for questions, as well as discussion during the Break Out Group time. Chairman Hanley, she said, would be speaking on March 19<sup>th</sup>, as the group considered the **Political Dynamics** involved in advancing our Fairfax County agenda. Other speakers on March 19<sup>th</sup> will be WTOP’s Steve Eldridge, Delegate Vivian Watts, Delegate Chap Peterson and Delegate Dave Albo.

The program for the evening’s Community Dialog discussion was **Funding for Transportation**. Panelists were: Young Ho Chang, Director of Fairfax County Department of Transportation; Thomas Farley, Northern Virginia District Administrator for the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT); and Rick Taube, Executive Director, Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC).

- **Ho Chang** began the discussion with a quick translation of the “Alphabet Soup” of transportation organization and program acronyms. His presentation covered the roles and responsibilities of federal, state, regional, sub-regional and local organizations/governments. He described the various revenue sources that fund transportation, and spoke about funding formulas that drive our allocation of funding in Fairfax County. [See details of Ho Chang’s presentation.](#)
- **Tom Farley** said that Northern Virginia received 25% of the State’s share of funding

for transportation and that we are 25% of the State's population. For transportation funding, we used to be a donor area, but our funding allocation has improved in recent years. In funding for localities, \$33 million comes to the Northern Virginia District. \$20 million of that comes to Fairfax for secondary roads. We cover, however, 15,000 lane miles, which is more than the lane miles of other entire states.

The **Six-Year Plan** is VDOT's "bible". It corresponds with the TEA's (the federal government's transportation plans) which also span six years. The Six-Year Plan has strings attached since it is co-mingled with federal dollars. It is a \$2 billion program (down from \$2.6 billion prior to the State's budget difficulties of the past two years). Setting priorities involves local governments.

When people ask "Why does it take so long?" to build roads and mass transit, VDOT must comply with Federal Clean Air Requirements, NEPA (environmental) requirements, wetlands restrictions, and must address historic site issues and noise abatement. The process takes time as well as the project itself.

Tom Farley spoke briefly about the Sierra Club lawsuit, which resulted in the Supreme Court overruling an EPA decision to give our region more time to address our Clean Air problems. As a result, our region has a "Clean Air Budget" and all projects must be evaluated for potential negative effects on our air quality. If we violate our Clean Air requirements, we jeopardize the entire area with having Federal transportation funding frozen.

Mr. Farley next spoke about the **2020 Plan**, a constrained (future funding sources at least identified, if not in hand) long range plan for roads and mass transportation projects throughout the Northern Virginia region. The 2020 Plan was adopted in 1999 by a (now dissolved) body called the TCC (Transportation Coordinating Council). The body consisted of elected representatives throughout the region. The Plan sought to balance projected development within the region with a sufficient transportation network. A hallmark of the Plan was its significant component of mass transportation (40%) compared with previous plans.

The TCC was a precursor to the **Northern Virginia Transportation Authority**, which was created by the General Assembly in the year 2001. It is comprised of the elected chairmen and mayors (or their designees) of Northern Virginia jurisdictions and is tasked with transportation planning and decisions regarding funding. It is our local "MPO" (Metropolitan Planning Organization).

The group asked questions about cost overruns on large projects. Mr. Farley explained that generally what was charged to be "cost overruns" were actually due to the fact that VDOT's estimated costs have lagged behind inflationary increases between the time a project first gets on the list and is finally built years (or sometimes decades) later. VDOT now puts "fixed date for completion" in their contracts. They also build in incentives for a contractor finishing up ahead of schedule and on budget. While common in the private sector, "Design Build" is starting to be used by VDOT as a new innovation.

- **Rick Taube** explained that Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (**NVTC**) was a planning organization, directed by a board consisting of elected representatives throughout the Northern Virginia area. Member jurisdictions include Fairfax County, Arlington, Alexandria, Falls Church, The City of Fairfax and Loudoun County. A “sister” organization called Potomac Rappahannic Transportation Commission (**PRTC**) is made up of representatives of Stafford County, Prince William County, Manassas, Manassas Park and the City of Fredericksburg. NVTC and PRTC receive and distribute funding for mass transportation. PRTC also runs a bus system. NVTC was the founding organization for the Virginia Railway Express (**VRE**). Both NVTC and PRTC appoint members to the VRE Operations Board and this group oversees the operation of the commuter railroad.

Information presented in Mr. Taube’s presentation can be found on NVTC’s excellent new website at [www.novatc.state.va.us](http://www.novatc.state.va.us) and [www.thinkoutsidethecar.org](http://www.thinkoutsidethecar.org)

According to Mr. Taube, basically all transit in Virginia is a local expense, funded through local government and users. The opposite is true in Maryland where virtually all transit is paid for by the State.

Our region receives 75% of all available state aide for transit. If we got what the State statute says we could/should get, we would get twice as much as we are currently receiving. We can receive a greater match from the Federal Transportation Trust Fund for mass transit than we do for roads.

NVTC explores innovative new transit programs. Mr. Taube mentioned the VRE, the Tysons Shuttle and a new Clean Diesel Bus System in Falls Church as examples.

The Group next raised some questions of the Panelists. In response to one question, Ho Chang explained that a “firewall” exists on the Federal level protecting transportation funding from being used for other uses, but the State does not have such a mechanism. Members of the group commented that the fear of having our money siphoned away into the State’s General Fund, or to other parts of the State, was a chief reason for the Sales Tax Referendum’s failure.

In response to a question about increasing Metro’s capacity, Rick Taube talked about Metro’s strained budget. Taking care of their existing equipment/plant was taking precedence over system expansion and opening Metro to new corridors. Ho Chang commented that within the next 10 years Fairfax County was obligated for \$170 million for Metro that “we just don’t have”.

The Community Dialog participants next broke into Discussion Break Out Groups. Group Leaders were asked to facilitate discussion on the questions:

- 1. If insufficient funding is the reason (or a major part of the reason) for our transportation problems, what would you do differently from the status quo?*
- 2. What strategies OTHER than more funding/new revenues would you suggest for relieving transportation congestion?*

When the group re-convened, Group Leaders reported as follows:

**Team One: Bob Griendling and Phylis McDivitt**

When he asked his group if insufficient funding is the problem, nobody's hand went up. Maybe it's part of the problem, but there seem to be plenty of other problems.

Transportation Funding is really complicated.

There's a lot more money for highways than for transit.

A JLARC (State Study) found that our transportation funding system is broken.

Maybe there's a problem with classification – i.e. Braddock Rd. is a secondary road!

Back to the Dillon Rule, we never get the help we need in our urban area in a basically agrarian state.

Development is a problem.

Zoning laws are stacked in favor of land owners' rights.

In Braddock District, with a population of 90,000 (sic: actually the figure is about 106,000), we have only 2,000 square feet of office space.

We need more telecommuting.

Traffic lights should be better synchronized.

Higher density development should be put around Metro stations.

**Team Two: Chris Craig and Judy Rexrode:**

1. Some ideas for improving capacity and funding:

Charge drivers more to use roads during peak hours. Regulate charges by time of day.

More toll roads, HOT Lanes.

Charge trucks higher fees for driving during peak hours.

3. Prioritize spending:

Create a realistic plan.

Many “layers” where money is used, bureaucratic!

Privatize VDOT projects.

Have VDOT compete with private sector for projects.

### **Group Three: Russell Klosk and Jan Heditniemi**

#### **What changes from Status Quo?**

Group felt that everything *is* underfunded. They kept coming back to user fees: tolls, increase gas tax, levy tax parking at employment centers, HOT lanes. Triple registration fees for high polluting vehicles (older cars, more cylinders, etc.)

Retry Sales Tax, but with better PR and education of citizenry. Keep developers out of process.

Remove Dillon Rule and establish Home Rule for taxing.

Do something drastic. If legislature won't act, sue or something.

#### **Some Non-funding solutions**

Leverage the economic power and economic growth of our region to get action.

We need our Northern Virginia legislators to stick together. Work to get all our Northern Virginia legislators to act with a single voice for the good of the region.

Do a heavy public transit ridership campaign (ad campaign).

Encourage development along rail routes.

Make it financially viable to ride vs. drive – free parking, lowest fares at busiest periods, employer incentives (tax rebates – Metro check).

County-sponsored telecommuting centers.

Tax incentives for telecommuting.

Ban non- (?) commercial traffic during rush hours.

Discourage students from driving whenever possible (college students, high school students). No cars for juniors. Raise the driving age in Northern Virginia.

Change to smaller buses for non-heavily traveled routes or mid day.

Make buses more comfortable and keep clean and well maintained.

**Group Four: Jeff Nolan and Fidel Ortega**

**Issues:**

“Web” Transportation (in 2020 Plan) is not really being integrated.

Major routes are being upgraded/increased in size for vehicular traffic, as opposed to accommodating a more balanced “Web” Plan.

**Solutions:**

More North-South vs. East West roads (including Metro on Beltway).

New technologies/modes, i.e. segway, needs to be integrated into existing system.

More bicycle trails, both paved and next to roads.

New bonding authority.

Dedicated funding stream (increased gasoline tax?)

More focus on transit and less on roads.

Consider using school buses and handicap vans also for public transportation.

Supervisor Sharon Bulova adjourned the Fourth Community Dialog Meeting at about 9:30 PM.

**In Attendance:**

Chair: Sharon Bulova

Staff: Florence Naeve  
Joanne Swick  
Colin Campbell  
Ronni McCrohan

Sally Tomlin  
Amanda

Participants:

George Barker  
Mr. James J. Buratti  
Bernice & Patrick Colvard  
Mr. Christopher Craig  
Mrs. Dorothy Dane  
Mr. and Mrs. Dan Desko  
Mr. Ivan Dietrich  
Mr. Mervin Dizenfeld  
Mr. Robert Griendling  
Ms. Suzanne Harsel  
Ms. Jan Hedetniemi  
Mr. Reid Herlihy  
Mr. Loren W. Hershey  
Ms. Nell Hurley  
Mr. Kurt Johnson  
Mr. Paul Kite  
Mr. Russell M. Klosk  
Mr. Michael S. Malak  
Ms. Phyliss A. McDevitt  
Mr. Tom Meany  
Walter & Harriet Mika  
Mr. John Miranda  
Mr. Jeffery Nolan  
Ms. Barbara Nunes  
Mr. Fidel Ortega  
Mr. Thomas Reinkober  
Bob And Judy Rexrode  
Ms. Reine Rosenbaum  
Peter Skoro  
Mr. and Mrs. Harry Stevenson  
Mr. Jeff Stoll  
Mr. Ben Tribbett  
Mr. Timothy Lee Unrine  
Mr. Mark Werfel  
Mr. and Mrs. James A. Williams  
Mr. Chet McLaren

**Associated Resources:**

[Where Transportation Funding Comes From and Funding and Planning Organizations](#)

[How is Public Transit Planned and Funded \(selected highlights\)](#)

[Public Transit Systems Operating in Northern Virginia - Operating Statistics and Performance Indicators, FY 2002](#)

[Northern Virginia Transportation Commission Subsidy Allocation Model - FY 2003](#)  
[Summary of Subsidies and Assistance](#)